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ABSTRACT

This publication presents reports from National Forums '89, the culminating event of the National Issues Forums (NIF) 1988-89 cycle. A brief overview of this event is followed by a summary of the session entitled Executive Branch Conference: Reports from the Forums, in which policymakers were briefed on the outcomes of each of the 1988-89 issues. The three topics are (1) coping with AIDS, (2) health care for the elderly, and (3) the public debt. A report follows of the National Forums' first National Town Meeting, a national political discussion in the form of an old-fashioned town meeting at which key congressional members and national opinion leaders joined NIF participants. Discussion centered on the condition of the democracy and the roles of elected representatives and citizens in the democratic process. The next report summarizes the choices made by Forum participants as they discussed the issues and listened to one another's views. Other contents of the publication include a report on participants' stories on how the Forums worked in their communities, a list of recipients of awards for distinction in special programming, a report comparing news media and NIF approaches, an announcement of 1989-90 issues, a report on a session on how to involve local policymakers in NIF activities, and a report on a panel discussion on possible collaboration between individual Forums and the National Archives and Records Administration. (YLB)

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NATIONAL FORUMS '89
A Report
Citizens, Leaders Look at Our Democracy

National Town Meeting

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Nearly 300 National Issues Forums participants from across the nation gathered in Washington, D.C. April 16 through 19 for National Forums '89, the culminating event of the National Issues Forums 1988-1989 cycle.

They met with members of Congress, representatives of the Executive Branch, and national opinion leaders to look at how well our democracy is doing, the responsibilities of citizens, and how successful we are at meeting those responsibilities. And as the NIF convenors and participants exchanged stories of Forums in their communities, they discussed ways to help citizens become more informed about national issues and gain an influential role in public policymaking.

The issue of the responsibility of citizens was the thread that ran through every session of the conference. "It is obvious that most people think about the end of politics — about government and elections," David Mathews said as he reflected on the NIF year and NF '89.

The responsibilities of citizens, he reminded the participants, are those things that governments cannot do: setting purposes or creating legitimacy for their government; defining common interests and building common ground; securing the will of the people to act; and creating citizens.

Referring to the discussions of the past two days, he observed that NIF "is one of the few organizations that understands politics from beginning to end. They're one of the few efforts in the country that are concentrated not simply on celebrating the virtues of democracy and those wonderful platitudes about citizens being the highest officers in the land, but are systematically at work on helping people claim the responsibility and do the hard work of making choices, building common ground, generating will, and developing citizens. More than any issue we attack, more than any Forum we have, more than any information we divulge, that may be our greatest contribution."

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Policymakers Hear Reports from Forums

NIF convenors report Forum results to policymakers

Executive Branch policymakers who work in areas concerned with each of the 1988-1989 NIF issues joined convenors from six communities in a panel discussion hosted by the White House Office of Domestic Policy at the Old Executive Office Building. They heard not only outcomes of Forums on each issue, but also the deliberations that led participants to their conclusions.

William L. Roper, Deputy Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy, moderated the session entitled Executive Branch Conference: Reports from the Forums. He was joined by Louis Hays, acting administrator, Health Care Financing Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; James Mason, Assistant Secretary for Health, Health and Human Services; and James Pinkerton, Deputy Assistant to the President for Policy Planning.

NIF panelists were James W. Manuel, Starkville, Mississippi; Marta Provenghi, El Paso, Texas; Enrique Ramirez, San Francisco, California; Edward Rocks, Pittsburg California; Yvonne Sims, Grand Rapids, Michigan; and Dorothy Wylie, New Port Richey, Florida.

William Roper started the discussion with the public debt issue. Ed Rocks reported that Forum participants in his community felt that defense was the most logical place to make cuts in the federal budget, but that a tax increase was also necessary to reduce the deficit. "You'd think people would be reluctant to raise taxes and that's true," he said. But that was the common ground they came to if that tax would go for one specific issue — retiring public debt."

The same was true in Florida. "People didn't come to the Forums with the idea that they wanted to raise taxes to pay off the debt," Dorothy Wylie said. "They came with many different ideas. But as they talked, they did not believe that it's going to happen otherwise. They want the money that's going to support interest to go for other things."

James Pinkerton acknowledged that "the greatest challenge facing the government is controlling the deficit." But, he said, the administration is opposed to a tax increase because it is determined not to interrupt economic growth. Instead, he said, it wants a line item veto which would give the President power to make choices in government spending and a constitutional amendment to balance the budget.

Rocks pointed out that Forum participants realized there are trade-offs in getting the budget under control. "The escalation of the federal budget was felt so strongly that they were willing to take, if necessary, an economic slowdown in order to pay that off," he said.

Roper then turned the discussion to the issue of health care for the elderly, and the convenors agreed with Yvonne Sims that health care concerns Americans of all ages, not just the elderly. "We had opinions come into these meetings with the people," she said. "But when they came together and 'worked through' and tried to come to some kind of common opinion on what should be done about health care for the elderly, what they decided was that there

was a basic right of every American citizen to have a certain level of health care."

College students, James W. Manuel said, "felt the need for a health care plan that is not only across the board for everybody, but is also efficient. When people came in there were two sides, right and left," he said. "By the end of the night they came together on the common ground that there needs to be some sort of national health policy that is effective."

Citizens in El Paso came to the same conclusion, Marta Provenghi said, but they also want a health plan that will emphasize prevention and educate people in how to take better care of themselves.

"I'm struck by the obvious interrelationship between our first two topics," Louis Hays said. "It's almost impossible to talk about the issue of health care, whether it's for the elderly or for the population in general, without talking about the problem of the deficit."

The Administration's budget proposal calls for a 10 percent increase in Medicare spending for fiscal year 1990, he said, as opposed to the 14 percent increase that would go into effect without any changes in law. "It's clear that no one can afford over time, growth rates in the neighborhood of 14 percent year after year." He suggested that attention be paid to "how much value we're getting for our health care expenditures."

The third topic, AIDS, had caused both confusion and concern among participants coming into all the Forums. But, as Provenghi said, "after talking about the alternatives we realized the need to be educated about the AIDS disease and to dispel all the myths associated with it."

"Once the misinformation was dispelled they felt better able to look at what might help," Rocks said. "And since they themselves were ignorant, they felt that education was the most important thing."

Participants in most of the Forums, the panelists reported, felt schools should do more to educate students about AIDS. "That was a startling result for our community, which is predominantly Hispanic and has strong religious values," Provenghi said. "But a high percentage was willing to relinquish that education to the schools. We need all the help we can get. We want the right information and as expeditiously as possible."

Adults also need information, they concluded, not only about the disease and how it is — and is not — spread, but to help them make decisions about AIDS and policies affecting its victims.

"By the end of the night they came together on the common ground that there needs to be some sort of national health policy that is effective."

Enrique Ramirez pointed out that many people in high-risk groups can't read and suggested that more information be provided by radio. "There's a lot of literature," he said, "but there's nothing to help the nonreaders."

Forum participants also expressed concern about the civil rights of AIDS patients, including the issues of discrimination in employment and health insurance, and their right to privacy.

James Mason pointed to the link between AIDS and the other two issues, the national debt and health care. "A lot of the national debt and the health care expenditures in this nation are based upon either failure to apply clearly indicated prevention interventions or else to get certain behaviors that are highly costly under control," he said. "How do we get to the foundation of some of these problems that are leading to AIDS, to higher health care expenditures, to the national debt? I think I can bring it right down to the family."

He agreed with Yvonne Sims, though, that we should look at AIDS as everyone's responsibility. "We can't afford to say, 'Should it be parents? Should it be the schools? Should it be the government?' " she argued. "It should be everybody and everybody should take responsibility so we're all coming at it from the same direction — education, compassion, humanness. It is all our responsibility to see what it is we can do within our structure and be about the business of helping out."

Executive Branch session was taped for later broadcast

National Town Meeting

Congressional leaders and citizens evaluate our democracy

Key congressional members and national opinion leaders joined NIF participants at the National Press Club during National Forums '89 for a lively discussion of the condition of our democracy and the roles of elected representatives and citizens in the democratic process. The occasion, billed as a discussion of "How Is Our Democracy Doing?" was the National Forums' first-ever National Town Meeting, a national political discussion in the form of an old-fashioned town meeting.

Jim Leach, U.S. Representative from Iowa, opened the meeting. He is cochair of the NIF Congressional Advisory Committee, which hosted the session. Leach introduced the moderator, Hodding Carter III, a national television commentator, political analyst, and former State Department spokesman.

The guests, specially invited to join the NF '89 citizen-participants for this unusual session, included members of Congress and leaders of national organizations. They were: Lindy Boggs, U.S. Representative, Louisiana; John H. Buchanan Jr., chairman, Council for the Advancement of Citizenship and a former congressman from Alabama; Evelyn Dubrow, vice-president for legislative affairs, International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union;

Mervyn M. Dymally, U.S. Representative, California; Robert Edgar, director, The Committee for National Security and a former congressman from Pennsylvania; Thomas S. Foley, U.S. Representative, Washington, Majority Leader and now Speaker of the House; Wyche Fowler Jr., U.S. Senator, Georgia; Robert J. Kingston, president, The British Institute of the United States; Robert W. Lundeen, industrial consultant and former chairman, Dow Chemical Company;

David Mathews, president, Kettering Foundation; Harry Middleton, director, Lyndon B. Johnson Library and Museum; Alan C. Nelson, commissioner, U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service; Robert C. Nelson, senior correspondent "World Monitor," *Christian Science Monitor Television;* Mary Rose Oakar, U.S. Representative, Ohio;

Connie Odems, vice-president, American Association of Community and Junior Colleges; Charles B. Rangel, U.S. Representative, New York; Cathy Rudder, executive director, American Political Science Association; Peter Smith, U.S. Representative, Vermont; Lowell P. Weicker Jr., president, Research America and former senator from Connecticut; and William F. Winter, senior partner, Watkins, Ludlam and Stennis, chairman, National Civic League, and former governor of Mississippi.

Lobbies: A Third House

The discussion focused on the role of citizens in the democratic process and how the public's role in decision making can be encouraged and strengthened. Carter skillfully led the participants as they weighed the role and influence of special interest groups in our government and the relative merits and disadvantages of majoritarian democracy.

Some of the participants expressed concern that special interest groups may have too much influence, and questioned whether the lobbies represent every segment of society.

"I have often said that in the United States we have three houses," Representative Dymally said, "the House of Representatives, the Senate — and the third house is the lobbies. They do a very good job professionally. I'm not so sure, however, that they represent the interests of the poor."

Agreeing with Representative Dymally that not all Americans are represented by pressure groups, Representative Rangel expressed the wish that churches and synagogues would get more involved and "compensate for that large gap that's left on Capitol Hill." But as long as the gap exists, it is the responsibility of members of Congress to consider the needs of the underrepresented. "We have a responsibility to do what we think is morally right and what the people have elected us to do," he said.

Representative Oakar gave an example of the legislators' concern for the national interest, pointing out that representatives of labor and the business community joined members of Congress in "lobbying for individuals who were not their constitu-

ents in general" as they worked to pass a comprehensive bill concerning the homeless.

But, she added, "I think the greatest lobbying group is your own constituents and people who as individuals write you letters and call you on the phone and come into your offices. That's really what influences most members in my judgment."

Do members of Congress have time to listen to all the voters in their districts, Carter asked, or is it necessary to listen to representatives of groups of voters?

"Obviously we listen to the groups, and they're usually very well informed," Representative Boggs said. "They have been since the beginnings of the Republic when lobbyists for various causes were relied upon to give the Congress information. But you do have a great deal of hands-on participatory democracy going on in the United States. We do go home every weekend; we see a large number of different kinds of groups of citizens. And we are very conscious of the kinds of concerns that they express."

In defense of lobbying, Connie Odems said she preferred the term "calling attention to voids." But with such a diversity of groups calling attention to special interests, Carter wondered if Congress has the ability to sort out the competing interests and make determinations that are in the national interest.

The National Interest

That led the members of Congress to reflect on their relation to the public at large and how, in the course of their duties as legislators, they carry out the national interest.

Representative Leach said elected officials have a responsibility to find out what citizens think. "It isn't that every group isn't represented in Washington," he said. "They all are. But some are disproportionately represented and I think there is, frankly, a major conflict that exists between those that give money and those that don't. I think a lot of it goes back to how campaigns are run. Increasingly we see elected representatives seek out the groups and make commitments that then add it up to something that may not make the national interest the overriding goal."

But legislators, Speaker of the House Foley said, do have the national interest in mind. "It's obvious that members of Congress and the House particularly are representing a very discreet part of the country, a special district, and the duties and obligations of that district are very high in the minds of members," he said. "In addition to that, though, I think we're all charged with the national interest. And I would argue that from time to time the Congress shows itself rather dramatically ahead of the country.... It is a tough job to sort this thing out. It is the collective judgment."

How important, Hodding Carter asked the elected representatives, are polls in determining public opinion?

"I think one of the problems in this country is this over-reliance on polling," Senator Fowler said. "It often leads to what I would call government by whimsy, where you poll the whimsical attitudes often based on faulty or inadequate information from your constituents. Then you set policy in that vacuum for that week. And when the public moves on or changes, then you're forced to change the policy and backtrack, too."

One of the citizens, a minister from Mississippi, pointed out that many polls don't really allow people to engage in the process of determining the national interest. "As a private citizen, I have never gotten a questionnaire from my legislator or senator that ever wanted to know my opinion," said the Rev. O. Wendell Manuel. "Usually I can tell by the questionnaire exactly what he wants to vote on by the choices he gives. And I find that very frustrating because I realize that if I really want to make my opinion heard, that it's going to take a lot more effort than normally I'm willing to give as a citizen; that you really have to get in there, you have to write a letter, you have to call and do something that gains more attention."

Most Americans don't seem to want that responsibility, Senator Weicker suggested. Contributing to the difficulty of determining the national interest, he said, is the fact that our national elections fail to give legislators a clear mandate.

"I'm not saying lobbying doesn't help," the senator said, "but the American citizen can't excuse himself or herself as to the role that they play and I think the time has come to take on that responsibility. As many people didn't vote as voted in this last election, and can you tell me exactly what obligation President Bush is under vis a vis his administration? He's under no obligation at all because nobody insisted

Legislators and lobbyists discuss the national interest

that either of the candidates present a platform which would then be their Administration. Now maybe the American people like this idea of politics as entertainment, but I'll tell you it's destroying the country."

The First Question in Politics

As the discussion about increasing citizen involvement continued, David Mathews presented what he termed a radical proposal. "I would suggest that we quit telling people that politics has to do only with governments and elections," he said. "The crucial question in politics is not who is government. The crucial question, and the first question in politics, is what kind of country do we want. Until we elevate that question and that broad sense of politics to the fore, we will always concentrate on the end of politics and not its beginning."

Referring to the responsibilities of citizenship, Senator Fowler stated, "The highest office in the land, that of citizen, is often left vacant by apathy."

Representative Smith pointed out that, while voters may be apathetic when it comes to national issues, citizen involvement is increasing at the local and regional level where people feel the individual can make a difference. "For many people the system is working well enough in their daily lives," he said, "but not well enough when we think of the national interest and shoot it into the twenty-first century."

Two lobbyists in the group, Evelyn Dubrow and Connie Odems, suggested changes in our education system to transmit the concept of democracy into practice. "We have two kinds of democratic practices in our country," Odems said. "One is concept that we teach and the other is what we practice. And sometimes there is a schism between those two. I'm very concerned, especially among our colleges, that somehow we have not transmitted the concept into reality and then practice. Practice goes beyond voting . . . and I think one of the ways that democracy has failed us is that it has not perpetuated itself in the daily lives of our people."

We talk about education, Evelyn Dubrow said, but don't do enough about it. "Unless we are willing to educate our children from the time they go to kindergarten . . . we're not going to be a superpower. We're going to be a Third World power because we are not meeting the challenges of the next 20, 30 years. We are not educating our people to understand how important our democracy is."

The National Town Meeting made a start at answering the question "How Is Our Democracy Doing?" Carter said in summary. "It's clear that we all know that there's a lot more that can be done and it's also clear to all of us that the only way it's going to be done is with more discussion, more interchange," he said. "It's clear from what's been said by all of us that not only are you the future, but the future is now. And the real question is what do we do with that future in shaping it.

"The citizen in this country obviously has to recapture the notion that he or she is the expert and as an expert has an obligation to offer that expertise to the larger enterprise, which is democracy. Remember that, in the end, what democracy is all about is one person interacting with another person . . . for the larger good of something called the state, or the region, or the community."

County Fair

Balloons, popcorn, and red bandanas set the tone for the NF '89 County Fair, a fun, lively, "how-to" session arranged in the format of an old-fashioned county fair. Instead of vegetables and baked goods, participants displayed promotional materials from their Forums. Souvenirs were given away, and the lucky winner of a drawing won a weekend in Peoria.

The Fair was hosted by a group of local NIF convenors, including John Clair, Urban League-NIF, Lake County, Illinois; Sara Davies, Leadership Evansville-NIF, Indiana; Debbie Demitroulas, Leadership Bloomington Alumni-NIF, Indiana; Joanne Dempsey, NIF-Peoria/Bradley University, Illinois; Carl Eschels, NIF-Grand Rapids, Michigan; and Edward Snyder, NIF-College of Lake County, Illinois.

Report on the Forums

What did Forum participants think about the issues? Using the pre- and post-Forum ballots, The Public Agenda Foundation has put together a report that shows the choices made by Forum participants as they discussed the issues and listened to one another's views.

In the Forums on "Coping with AIDS: The Public Response to the Epidemic," people talked about the underlying social and ethical issues, as well as the public response to this lethal epidemic. A 78 percent majority agreed that discrimination against people with AIDS is a serious national problem. At the same time, though, 62 percent supported the view that some infringements on the rights of those carrying the virus are necessary to protect the uninfected.

Much of the discussion revolved around the conflict between people's moral judgments about the behavior associated with transmission of the AIDS virus. The extent of their sympathy for those with AIDS and their willingness to approve of public spending for health care for AIDS victims depends in part on how individuals contracted the virus.

"In a broader sense, the discussions were about what kind of political leadership is needed to resolve the problem."

Repeatedly, Forum participants stated the view that the AIDS epidemic has resulted in large part from an erosion of moral values. A 61 percent majority agreed that laws against sodomy and illicit drugs should be strictly enforced, and a vocal minority opposed government expenditures for those who contracted AIDS through homosexual behavior or IV drug use.

Twelve percent of participants agreed with the statement that "AIDS is God's punishment for sinful behavior" and did not significantly change their views between the pre-Forum ballot and the post-Forum ballot. This group did not think AIDS victims deserve sympathy or concern for their civil rights.

The majority of Forum participants, however, were more inclined to balance the civil rights of infected individuals against the need to protect the uninfected. When the Forums ended, they were still divided about whether AIDS should be treated like any other public health problem.

Forums on "The Public Debt: Breaking the Habit of Deficit Spending" reflected broadly shared concern about the consequences of continued deficit spending.

A majority of participants supported significant cuts in defense spending, but there was little support for cutting domestic spending. There was also little support for raising income taxes or imposing new revenue sources such as a federal sales tax.

There was, however, growing support for several measures that would reduce the deficit, such as imposing a 5 percent across-the-board spending cut, taxing higher-income Social Security recipients, and turning over certain government services to private firms.

In a broader sense, the discussions were about what kind of political leadership is needed to resolve the problem. In the opinion of many Forum participants, the absence of honest and forthright statements about the deficit by elected officials is one of the most disturbing aspects of the problem.

The Forums on "Health Care for the Elderly: Moral Dilemmas, Mortal Choices" were more than discussions about what we can afford. In a deeper sense, they were discussions about values and priorities, and about the government's role and its limits.

General dissatisfaction with America's health care system was apparent throughout the discussions. As concerned as most people are about the health care needs of the elderly, they are more concerned about the fact that many people lack health insurance and some are denied adequate health care. In post-Forum ballots, 64 percent of the participants said they favored a national health insurance program to take care of the needs of all Americans.

The discussions about health care issues affecting the elderly reflected the vulnerability many people feel, both in regard to themselves and in terms of providing medical care for elderly parents. There was a clear consensus that the government should play an important role in meeting the medical needs of the elderly.

"In a deeper sense, they were discussions about values and priorities, and about the government's role and its limits."

Nearly half of the participants concluded that the federal government should provide long-term care for all chronically ill older people, while an additional 28 percent felt that benefit should be available only for the poor.

There was considerable discussion about how much the elderly still pay for their own health care, despite Medicare coverage. Participants rejected by more than a 2-to-1 margin the idea that deductibles and co-payments should be eliminated. But those who said they would pay higher taxes to cover the cost of long-term care for the elderly outnumbered those who were unwilling by almost 2-to-1.

NATIONAL ISSUES FORUMS

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Participants Share Forum Stories

A newcomer wanting to know how NIF works had only to wander into the Monday morning session on "Telling the NIF Story: What Happened in the Forums." There, after small group discussions on their Forum experiences, a number of participants arose to describe how the Forums worked in their communities.

The participants and convenors from communities across the country talked about how people in their Forums *worked through* the issues, and then shared anecdotes and outcomes of these Forums.

The session was hosted by The Learning Channel, the cable television channel which will show parts of NF '89 later this year, along with programs on each of the issues.

Harold Morse, chairman and chief executive officer of The Learning Channel, spoke of the importance of "channeling our energies toward solutions instead of the separateness which leads to alienation."

He said he would like to see the media use technology to encourage more citizen participation. "We need to use television to encourage more and more people to take part in discussion that leads to solutions," he said. "We should be bringing people together to share their views in pursuit of constructive answers to challenging problems. To assist you in achieving that objective, TLC last October premiered a series of half-hour National Issues Forums."

Ron Nessen encourages participants to share Forum experiences

Ron Nessen, former press secretary to President Gerald Ford and currently vice-president of news for Mutual Broadcasting System, moderated the discussion, moving from table to table with the television cameras like a self-described "intellectual Phil Donahue."

Nessen, who has been involved with NIF for several years, said the "most important effect of the Forums is that they do not try to influence specific pieces of legislation; rather they concentrate on the public's role in setting broad policy or direction for the country. Most importantly, they are purely citizens talking to citizens."

He pointed out that this session was planned as an opportunity for participants to share their Forum experiences with one another rather than listening to policymakers talk to them.

"If any summary can be made," Nessen said after listening to the stories from the Forums, "it is that a lot of people did listen to each other, and they did learn something about these problems and the various solutions to them — people participated and learned. There were diverse opinions from diverse people and places and that's what the National Issues Forums is."

Issue Conversations

NF '89 participants had an opportunity to exchange ideas with knowledgeable resource people in the three concurrent issue conversations on the 1988-1989 issues.

Each of the conversations was similar to a Forum, with participants and resource people engaging in a lively discussion of one of the issues.

Moderators and resource people for the conversations were:

- "Coping with AIDS": Moderator, Marnie Shaul, Ohio Department of Development, International Trade Division; Resource person, Jim Graham, administrator, Whitman-Walker Clinic, Inc.
- "Health Care for the Elderly": Moderator, Bruce Adams, council member, Montgomery County, Maryland; Resource person, Hanns Kuttner, Deputy Associate Director for Health and Human Services Policy, The White House.
- "The Public Debt": Moderator, Edwin Dorn, deputy director of research, Joint Center for Political Studies; Resource person, Alice Rivlin, senior fellow, The Brookings Institution.

NIF Programs Honored

Eugene Shirk accepts the award for Berks Community Television from Harold Morse of The Learning Channel

NIF programs and individuals were recognized during NF '89 at an awards luncheon hosted by the Council for the Advancement of Citizenship (CAC). Diane U. Eisenberg, CAC executive director, introduced the program, and the awards were presented by John H. Buchanan, Jr., CAC president and a former member of Congress.

Five NIF partners made awards to individuals and institutions for distinction in special programming. They are:

- American Association of Community and Junior Colleges to Lake Michigan College for its commitment to be the community institution to which students and citizens can turn to become informed about and participate in discussions of national issues.
- National Association of Community Leadership Organizations to Leadership Evansville (Indiana) which has provided community residents the opportunity to participate in National Issues Forums.
- National Council for the Social Studies to Leon Hellerman for helping hundreds of teachers use NIF in their classrooms as part of New York State's mandated Participation in Government course requirement.
- NIF Literacy Program to Jean Hammink, executive director of the Literacy Network, Inc., who has worked to include a full range of national and state organizations in the program.
- The Learning Channel to Berks Community Television in Reading, Pennsylvania, which has used cable television in innovative ways to bring NIF to residents of the region.

Awards were also presented to NIF programs that have demonstrated a long-standing commitment to the goals of the National Issues Forums. Recipients were:

- Tucson (Arizona) Issues Forums; Dawn Graham, convenor; seven-year program.
- Contra Costa Community College District, Contra Costa County, California; John Carhart, convenor; five-year program.
- Wesley Center Public Forums, University of Miami, Florida; Dr. Phil Sageser, convenor; six-year program.
- University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia; Eugene Younts and Margaret Holt; seven-year program.
- PocatelloVision 12, Pocatello, Chubbuck, and Inkom, Idaho; Randy Ammon, convenor; five-year program.
- NIF Study Circles - North Shore, Chicago; Janis W. Hattis, convenor; six-year program.
- Mt. Sunflower University, Wallace County, Kansas; Shirley Blaesi and Stephanie Brock, convenors; six-year program.
- College of Home Economics, Lexington, Kentucky; Peggy S. Meszaros, convenor; six-year program.
- Callahan Senior Center NIF, Framingham, Massachusetts; Mary Parcher, convenor; five-year program.
- Saginaw National Issues Forum, Saginaw, Michigan; Donald R. Scott, convenor; six-year program.
- Starkville Issues Forum, Starkville/Mississippi State University; Charles Washington and O. Wendell Manuel, convenors; six-year program.
- NIF Independence Neighborhood Association, Independence, Missouri; Floyd Finch, convenor; seven-year program.
- Syracuse University National Issues Forum, New York State and Florida Syracuse University Alumni Associations; Joseph Julian, convenor; six-year program.
- Public Libraries and the National Issues Forums, Durham and Research Park, North Carolina; Benjamin F. Speller, Jr.; five-year program.
- NIF - The Ohio State University, Columbus and Cincinnati, Ohio; David B. Patton; seven-year program.
- National Public Issues Series, Edison State Community College, Piqua, Ohio; Willard H. Hart, convenor; six-year program.
- Tonkawa Public Library/National Issues Forums, Tonkawa, Oklahoma; Sally Coughlin, convenor; five-year program.
- Berks Community Television, City of Reading and Berks County, Pennsylvania; Ann Sheehan, convenor; six-year program.
- National Issues Forums - Memphis, Memphis, Tennessee; Stoy Bailey, convenor; six-year program.
- National Issues Forums (Leadership El Paso Alumni Association), El Paso, Texas; Jule Zimet, convenor; five-year program.

Media, NIF Approaches Discussed

The news media and National Issues Forums use different approaches in looking at important issues, but there may be hope that they are moving closer together, according to some of the views presented at The Public Agenda Foundation Symposium, "The Public's View of the Issues."

Panelists for the symposium were James Atwater, dean of the University of Missouri School of Journalism; Mary Rose Oakar, U.S. Representative from Ohio and cochair of the NIF Congressional Advisory Committee; Jean Johnson, director of programs for The Public Agenda Foundation; Keith Melville, editor-in-chief of the NIF issue books; and Deborah Wadsworth, executive director of The Public Agenda Foundation.

The moderator was Robert C. Nelson, senior correspondent, "World Monitor," *Christian Science Monitor Television.*

Their conversation focused on the essence of the deliberative democratic process as played out in the Forums, as well as the role of the media in shaping public opinion and the consequences for democratic decision making.

Johnson started by describing how problems are framed in the issue books. By providing a political, social, and economic description of an issue, she said, the books immediately alert readers to the tensions and difficulties of the issue. The news media, on the other hand, present the facts but do not define the problem in the same way.

Panelists compare media and NIF approaches on issues

"We're better at facts than values," Atwater conceded. "We've been trained over the years in objectivity." But, he said, there is a growing tendency to put issues into perspective and reporters now are less hesitant to provide interpretation.

Oakar expressed concern that the media show a "lack of interest in substantial issues that really affect the average American."

"The press is scared stiff that people won't be listening to them," Atwater said. "There is a growing sense of boredom with what goes on in communities and in the world. The educational level is going up, but readership and circulation are not."

Oakar's response was that "Sometimes the media sell the consumer short in terms of intellectual capacity. They think they don't care about issues."

Nelson suggested adding continuity to depth to increase interest. "Communities would be better served by careful, steady attention that shows the continuity of a story," he said.

But, Atwater said, "It's not enough to put it on the table and expect people to come look at it."

The news media, Johnson felt, do a "terrific job of bringing issues to the attention of Americans. But what the National Issues Forums do is different — not better, but certainly different. We show there are no easy answers."

1989-1990 Issues, Resources Announced

Organizations are providing resources for Forums

The 1989-1990 NIF issues were introduced at NF '89 in a session hosted by the Congressional Institute for the Future.

Rob McCord, executive director of the Institute, which is concerned with the kind of emerging issues discussed in National Issues Forums, introduced the session and talked about congressional interest in the topics for the coming year. They are: "The Drug Crisis: Public Strategies for Breaking the Habit"; "The Day Care Dilemma: Who Should Be Responsible for the Children?"; and "The Environment at Risk: Responding to Growing Dangers."

The growth of the NIF network was evident as Robert J. Kingston, senior associate of the Kettering Foundation, introduced representatives of organizations providing a variety of resources to assist in planning and implementing the 1989-1990 Forums.

The resources include the National Archives and Records Administration, The Learning Channel, Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, PBS/Adult Learning Satellite Service, Summer Public Policy Institutes, NIF Directory and Self-Assessment, Pennsylvania State University, the Sierra Club, and the Federation for Public Programs in the Humanities.

Local Leaders Seen as Key to NIF Success

Richard Harwood, Paula MacIlwaine, John Parr recommend strategies

One of the challenges facing NIF participants is how to involve local policymakers in NIF activities. In a session hosted by the National Civic League, NF '89 participants first discussed strategies in small groups and then exchanged views with a panel of respondents knowledgeable in the area of local politics.

John Parr, president of the National Civic League, introduced the program by stating that the resolution of national problems is going to take more and more collaboration with not only government officials, but private sector leaders, citizen activists, and citizen organizations.

"One of the challenges for those of you involved in the National Issues Forums," he said, "is how to form those coalitions."

Suggestions that came out of the small group discussions included targeting community leaders, Chambers of Commerce, economic development groups, union representatives, and industry and education councils. One group suggested contacting aides to local policymakers because they may be more accessible and interested.

> ***Harwood also advised participants to not just report back to leaders, but to include them in NIF activities.***

But when the panel responded, Paula MacIlwaine, president of the Montgomery County (Ohio) Commission, didn't agree. She suggested getting on the policymakers' calendar to discuss one issue that he or she is interested in — not all three.

Richard Harwood, principal of the Harwood Group which works with organizations to help them define and find ways to resolve problems, said leaders need to know how a consensus emerged in the Forums. "Think where your information can fit in with what they need to know," he said.

Harwood also advised participants to not just report back to leaders, but to include them in NIF activities.

MacIlwaine emphasized the need to localize national issues. "You're underestimating your ability to get something from us," she said. "As a local public official, I have to shape policy every day. I would caution you not to rely so much on national leaders because most policymaking and spending is done at the local level."

National Archives Welcomes NIF

United States Army 3rd Infantry Fife and Drum Corps at the National Archives

Dressed in Revolutionary War uniforms, the United States Army 3rd Infantry Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps provided a stirring welcome as NF '89 participants entered the National Archives Building on Sunday evening. In the auditorium upstairs, John Fawcett, assistant archivist for Presidential Libraries, welcomed the guests and said the National Archives and Records Administration was delighted to be part of the NIF coalition.

Fawcett described the records kept by the Archives which document the relationship of Americans to the federal government over the past 200 years. Some of those documents, he pointed out, relate to NIF issues, and he invited participants to use them to gain perspective on the issues. As it did last year, the Archives will prepare a packet of documents relating to the 1989-1990 issues.

Harry Middleton, director of the Lyndon B. Johnson Library and Museum, moderated a panel discussion on the possibilities for collaboration between local Forums and the National Archives and Records Administration, its regional collections and Presidential Libraries and Museums.

Diane Nixon, director of the Pacific Southwest Regional Archives, urged NIF participants to use the 11 regional archives, which Harriett Walther, executive director of the Orange County (California) NIF, described as "a national resource in a local setting."

Carl Eschels, coordinator of NIF-Grand Rapids, and Frank Mackaman, director of the Gerald R. Ford Library and Museum, discussed the partnership between the museum and local Forums.

The panel discussion was followed by a reception hosted by the National Archives and Records Administration in the Rotunda of the Archives building. Music was provided by the Army Brass Quintet of the United States Army Band (Pershing's Own) as NIF participants from across the nation gathered in the presence of the Archives' most important documents, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

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